

Vocal and Instrumental Music in Worship.

"In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee."—Hebrews 2: 12.

SINGING is the divinely appointed means by which "we make melody in our hearts to the Lord." There may be singing, however, without any spiritual or even moral quality, designed simply to entertain. There is also singing designed for culture and improvement, which may be right, but having nothing sacred or religious in it. It is common to meet with those who enjoy either vocal or instrumental music. They love its varied tones, its sweet strains, its melodies. There are many exercises, however, in which we delight that are not worship. An exercise in elocution or a well-delivered declamation is pleasant and entertaining; but if it is not spiritual, forms no part of religious worship. It is singing in obedience to divine command that we wish to define. We are not to sing simply because we love to sing, but because it is a part of the divinely-appointed means of worship; and is therefore pleasing in God's sight. The entire routine of religious worship is of divine appointment, and is not designed to amuse or entertain, but to edify, in praise, homage, and thanksgiving to the God we worship.

As to the purposes and characteristics of the music designed for worship, the Scriptures say: "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God. Eph. 5: 18-20.

This text provides that the music in worship shall be *singing*. The service of singing fills an important place in worship. The untutored mind loves noise, even without melody. This is seen in the worship of the half-civilized tribes; but as they become refined they cultivate tones less harsh; and when they receive the high culture of the Gospel they desire to praise with the sweet tones of the voice, prompted by the spirit within the heart.

This singing includes (1) *Speaking to yourselves*. How very impressive is truth expressed in song; the Christian receives great comfort in reading spiritual songs, some of which seem to be well-nigh inspiration; but when they are sung with the sweet tones of the human voice there is a peculiar fascinating and moulding power in the exercise. Speaking to yourselves implies thought and meditation; this entirely excludes the use of instruments. In harmony with this the apostle says, "What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."

(2) *Giving thanks*. Thanks is defined by Webster as "an expression of gratitude, an acknowledgment made to express a sense of favor or kindness received." How grand the thought that God has provided for Christians to give gratitude to him in song.

(3) *This music is to teach and admonish*. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Col. 3:16. Sentiments put in rhyme and sung in the congregation have a peculiar moulding power in them; hence there is no part of our church literature that has need

to be guarded with more care than the sentiment put in rhyme and sung in the congregations. Sentiments put in song have a peculiar, fascinating influence upon the mind, that is difficult to resist with argument. Therefore our hymns and spiritual songs should contain pure Gospel sentiment.

Much of the singing in the churches to-day is a kind of operatic performance, reducing the beautiful songs of Zion to unintelligible phrases. This, like the use of musical instruments, does not impart spiritual ideas. No one is taught. No one has his understanding enlightened. It is not in harmony with Paul's instruction, "Sing with the spirit and with the understanding." Therefore it is not of God. Instead of an instrument being a help in teaching sentiment in our song service, it really so confuses the ear that the sentiment sung becomes unintelligible. Such instrumental song service may attract and entertain, but can not edify and build up the spiritual man. Therefore it defeats the design of singing in worship.

(4) *Admonition.* Admonish means, "To warn, to notify of fault, to reprove with mildness." That admonition is necessary in the church to guard us from evil is apparent, and this text provides that it be given in song. What a source of power for good! What divine wisdom to admonish in song!

A musical instrument is lifeless, it imparts no sentiment. Hence it can take no part in this admonition in song. The sweet tones of the voice alone can do this. It is evident that Christ in setting up his church associated singing with the service, but left out instrumental music. Therefore, whosoever moves a musical instrument into the sacred enclosure and associates its use with Christian wor-

ship is adding to the sayings of Christ, and is therefore a violator warned in Rev. 22: 18.

We are opposed to the use of musical instruments in Christian worship for the following reasons:

1. Neither Christ nor the apostles ever authorized the use of musical instruments in worship either by precept or example. This truth is of great weight. Sad results follow where God's order of worship is disregarded.

2. A musical instrument is as helpless in Christian worship as was Dagon in the house of Ashdod.

3. The origin of musical instruments does not commend their use in worship. The history in brief is this: Unto Adam and Eve were born Cain, Abel, and Seth. The sad, short history of Abel is well known. Of Seth's descendants it was early said, "Then began men to call upon the Lord." But of guilty Cain, a fugitive and a vagabond, it is said, "He went from the presence of the Lord." Of Cain's descendants we have, Lamech who introduced polygamy, and Tubal the father and inventor of the harp and organ. Having departed from the worship of God they doubtless sought these means as a balm, in their alienated condition.

(5) *David using musical instruments.* David's use of musical instruments is referred to by many as authority for their use in religious service, but this is evidently not well taken. The Scriptures bearing on this fact are as follows: "Moreover four thousand were porters; and four thousand praised the Lord with the instruments which I made, said David." 1 Chron. 23: 5. "And when the burnt offering began the song of the Lord began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel."

2 Chron. 29:27. "And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel." Ezra 3:10. Mark the texts quoted. These instruments were made by David, and were ordained by him. Ordain, means, to appoint, decree, establish, etc.

The prophet's comment is clear on this part of David's life. "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, that lie on beds of ivory; that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David." Amos 6:1, 5. While David did much that is praiseworthy, yet he made some mistakes, and the prophet plainly names his use of musical instruments as one of them. God tolerated Israel in their use of instruments of music in worship; but there is not the faintest record of his authorizing them in the Old or New Testament. God withstood Israel in having a king, yet he tolerated them in doing so, and sent his prophet to anoint him. Moses suffered Israel to give a writing of divorcement, but Jesus did not approve of it.

It is always well to note with care the difference between that which God tolerates and that which he authorizes. The following is the comment of Dr. Adam Clarke on the foregoing prophecy of Amos: "I believe that David was not authorized by God to introduce that multitude of musical instruments into divine worship. And I am satisfied that his conduct in this respect is most solemnly reprehended by this prophet. And I further believe that the use of such instruments of music in the Christian church is without the sanction and against the will of God, and that they are sinful. If there was a woe to those who invented instruments of music, as did David under the law, is there

no woe, no curse to them who invent them and introduce them into the worship of God under the Gospel? I am an old man, and an old minister, and I here declare I never knew them to be productive of any good in the worship of God, but have reason to believe that they are productive of much evil. Music as a science, I esteem and admire, but instruments in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music, and I here register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of the Author of Christianity."

Another passage referred to is 2 Chron. 29:25: "And he set the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets." On this verse Dr. Clarke says: "Moses had not appointed any musical instruments to be used in the divine worship; there was nothing of the kind under the first tabernacle. The trumpets or horns then used were not for song, nor for praise; but, as we use bells, to give notice to the congregation of what they were called upon to perform, etc. But David did certainly introduce many instruments of music into God's worship, for which, we have already seen, he was solemnly reprov'd by the prophet Amos, chap. 6: 1-6. Here, however, the author of this book states he had the commandment of the prophet Nathan, and Gad the king's seer; and this is stated to have been the commandment of the Lord by his prophets: but the Syriac and Arabic give this a different turn: 'Hezekiah appointed the Levites in the house of the Lord, with instruments of music and the sound of harps, and with the *hymns* of David and the *hymns* of Gad, the king's prophet, and of Nathan the king's prophet: for David *sang the praises of the Lord his God*

as from the mouth of the prophets.' It was by the hand, or commandment of the Lord and his prophets that the Levites should praise the Lord; for so the Hebrew text may be understood; and it was by the *order of David* that so many instruments of music should be introduced into the divine service. But were it even evident, which it is not, either from this or any other place in the Sacred Writings, that instruments of music were prescribed by divine authority *under the law*, could this be adduced with any semblance of reason that they ought to be used in *Christian worship*? No; the whole spirit, soul and genius of the Christian religion are against this; and those who know the church of God best, and what *constitutes its genuine spiritual state*, know that these things have been introduced as a substitute for the *life and power* of religion; and that where they prevail most, there is least of the *power* of Christianity. Away with such portentous baubles from the worship of that infinite Spirit who requires his followers to worship him *in spirit and in truth*; for to no such worship are those instruments friendly." (Clarke's Com., Vol. I, p. 954).

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